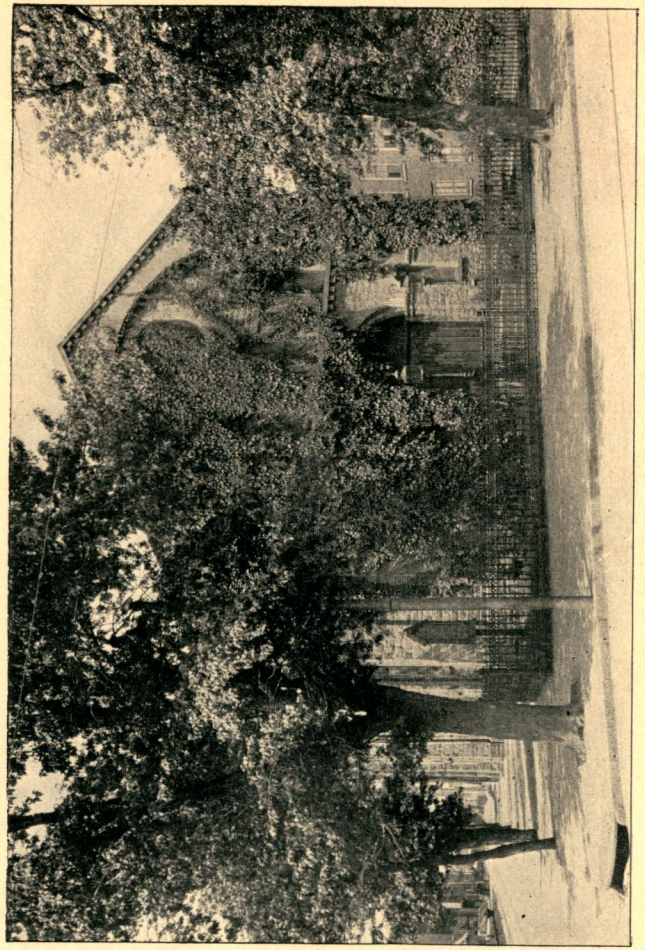

SAINT MATTHEW'S CHURCH, FRANCISVILLE
Eighteenth Street and Girard Avenue

Saint Matthew's Church

Francisville

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This Historical Sketch is published by the Vestry in connection with the services held on May 20-23, 1900, commemorative of the

Seventy-Fifth Anniversary

of the incorporation of the Parish by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania in 1825

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Philadelphia
May 20, 1900

REV. ROBERT WRIGHT FORSYTH

RECTOR

REV. ROBERT WRIGHT FORSYTH

Assistant Minister

REV. HENRI M. G. HUFF

Rector's Warden—EDWARD H. BONSALL

Accounting Warden—ISIDORE LEVIN

Vestrymen

SAMUEL R. MARSHALL	HENRY D'OLIER
JOHN OVERN	AUSTIN R. HILL
HENRY O. HURLBURT	WM. W. THOMSON
JOHN J. GILROY	EDWARD POWELL
EDWARD R. STONE, M. D.	JAS. H. M. HAYES

Secretary of Vestry—WM. W. THOMSON

Organist and Choirmaster—PROF. ALBERT T. GARDNER

Sexton—FRANK H. HAMMILL

May 20, 1900

Sunday School

Superintendent—Edmund Burke McCarthy

Secretary—Thelwell Russell Coggshall

Treasurer—James H. M. Hayes

Librarian—Freeborn P. Coggshall

Officers and Teachers	51	
Pupils	467	
		518

Parish Societies

Yearly Beneficial Association

Woman's Guild

Chancel Chapter

Auxiliaries to Missions

Brotherhood of St. Andrew

Boys' Guild

Sisters of Bethany

Young People's Association

Present Number of Communicants . . . 469

Saint Matthew's Church, Francisville,

Was begotten of the zeal and energy of the Rev. Benjamin Allen, Rector of St. Paul's Church, Philadelphia. In his Memoir it is recorded that in 1822 he organized St. Andrew's Church, and in the same year "a second Church was set in motion by Mr. Allen, who proceeded to establish a Missionary Station at Francisville, in the vicinity of the city. To support this mission Mr. Allen organized a Special Female Missionary Society, comprised chiefly of members of his Bible Class. The Rev. Norman Nash was given charge; all money raised over and above the support of the missionary was to be applied to the erection of a church. The Society persevered until the building was completed and delivered to the Vestry."

The corner-stone was laid on October 17, 1822, and contained the following inscription written on parchment:

"SAINT MATTHEW'S CHURCH,

"*Built upon Schuylkill North Fourth, and at the corner of Powell and George Streets, in Francisville, near Philadelphia. The Rev. Norman Nash, Missionary, employed by the Female Protestant Episcopal Association of Penn Township, Minister and Superintendent of the building*

"This Corner-Stone was laid on the 17th of October, A. D. 1822, by the Rt. Rev. Wm. White, D. D., Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the Diocese of Pennsylvania, and Senior Bishop of the American Church."

The first recorded minutes show that the church building was consecrated on the seventh day of June, 1824, by Bishop White. At the conclusion of the exercises Mr. Allen addressed the people.

Francisville was at that time a small country village in the County of Philadelphia, and contained but a few scattered houses. The church building was about 28 x 30 feet, situated on a high bank with trees around, and was considered a pretty country church. The Methodist Church at the southwest corner of Nineteenth and Poplar Streets is built on part of this site.

Immediately after the consecration the Vestry met to choose a rector and wardens. Rev. Robert Piggott was unanimously elected Rector. D. J. Snethen was chosen Accounting Warden, and D. J. Knight appointed Rector's Warden. Rev. Mr. Piggott resigned on the eighth of February, 1825, and the same day Rev. James Wiltbank was elected to fill the vacancy.

On the twenty-fifth of March, 1825, the Supreme Court incorporated the church under the name of "The Rector, Church Wardens and Vestrymen of St. Matthew's Church, Francisville." The same year, in May, the parish was admitted to the Diocesan Convention, following St. Andrews, with which St. Matthew's seems to have been closely allied, as some of the names of its first vestry appear to be those of well-known members of St. Andrew's, Philadelphia.

Mr. Wiltbank resigned the rectorship during 1829 or 1830, and Rev. Jacob M. Douglass became rector in January, 1836. As there are no recorded minutes for ten years previous to April 20, 1840, it is not known how the gap in the rectorship was filled.

In 1842 the church building was extended fifteen feet to

the rear, with five additional feet for the chancel, so that it could seat two hundred and fifty persons.

Mr. Douglass resigned in 1844, and on November 5, 1844, Rev. G. Emlen Hare, D.D., was elected rector, continuing in charge until January 20, 1862. Many important changes occurred during Dr. Hare's incumbency.

In 1856 Joshua Francis Fisher and wife released the corporation from certain restrictions, whereby the sale of the lots on which the church stood became possible, the release stipulating that the proceeds of sale be applied to the building of a new church, to be situated not more than half a mile from the then location and to be styled "Saint Matthew's Church, Francisville," the proceeds to be "recorded in the most formal manner as the endowment of the said church by George Harrison and wife—my object being to preserve the name of the church in connection with its original location, and also the names of my uncle and aunt as contributing to the foundation."

The corporation did execute such an obligation. The lots were valued at three thousand dollars and so entered on the minutes of October 30, 1858.

On August 6, 1857, the present site, at the northeast corner of Eighteenth Street and Girard Avenue, was purchased; 80 feet by 125 feet, subject to a ground rent of $480 per year, and, on April 6, 1858, a contract was authorized for the erection of the present building, after plans made by John Notman, architect, the cost, with furniture, being about fifteen thousand dollars. This structure was consecrated December 23, 1858.

Two lots in the rear were bought in 1860, and a Sunday-school building, 28 by 56 feet, was begun, from plans by C. W. Hare, son of the rector, and a member of the Vestry. The

building was completed in 1862, having been constructed only as fast as funds came in.

The Rev. D. Otis Kellogg became rector August 8, 1862; he resigned October 3, 1865. During his rectorship the interior of the church was much improved and the congregation greatly increased.

The Rev. J. Houston Eccleston became the rector January 21, 1866. Under him the growth of the parish was very marked. The Sunday-school, under the superintendence of Mr. Jos. G. Darlington, had far outgrown its accommodations, and an enlargement of the church building was seriously contemplated. Mr. Eccleston was succeeded in 1870 by Rev. John Blake Falkner, whose administration was greatly blessed, particularly in the collection of funds to erect a new parish building large enough for the activities needing shelter. Mr. Falkner resigned in 1874, and Rev. D. Otis Kellogg was called to the parish, for a second pastorate.

During the winter of 1874 the long delayed wishes of the parish were realized, and a contract was signed in March, 1875, for the erection of the present parish building, which was completed during that year, and thus enduringly marked the fiftieth anniversary of the incorporation of the parish. Commemorative services in connection with this anniversary were held for several days, beginning May 9, 1875; the historical sermon was preached by Rev. Robert Piggott, who had been the rector fifty years before.

Mr. Kellogg retired in 1880, and was succeeded by Rev. John P. Hubbard, who held the position twelve years. During this time changes in the character of the neighborhood of the church became apparent, materially affecting the stability of the

congregation, yet the church building was greatly improved at a cost of over $4000—a new organ was erected costing $3000, and a large part of the funded debt was extinguished.

The present Rector, Rev. Robert W. Forsyth, assumed charge on May 15, 1892, Mr. Hubbard becoming Rector Emeritus, retaining that dignity until he "entered into rest" October 12, 1899.

In 1893 the dwelling 1731 Girard Avenue, adjoining the church, was bought for a rectory, costing $9100, of which a mortgage of $6000 remains. During the last two years all the funded and floating debts of the parish have been extinguished, except the rectory mortgage, and the Vestry have now resolved to mark this Seventy-Fifth year of the church's history by the beginning of an Endowment Fund; in the hope that this fund will in due season maintain St. Matthew's Church, Francisville, not only as an interesting historical landmark, but as an increasingly effective agency for the spiritual upbuilding of this section of the City of Philadelphia.

"*So we, that are thy people, and sheep of thy pasture, shall give thee thanks forever, and will alway be showing forth thy praise from generation to generation.*"—Ps. lxxix.

Rectors

Norman Nash	1822		
Robert Piggott	1824	J. Houston Eccleston	1866
James Wiltbank	1825	John Blake Falkner	1870
Jacob M. Douglass	1836	D. Otis Kellogg, D.D.	1874
G. Emlen Hare, D.D.	1844	John P. Hubbard	1880
D. Otis Kellogg	1862	Robert W. Forsyth	1892

Assistant Ministers

Benj. J. Douglass	1847–50	Robert A. Edwards	1865
Henry T. Hiester	1851-52	George C. Foley	1875–76
Henry S. Spackman	1853–57	H. M. G. Huff	1898

Vestrymen

Daniel Knight	1824	William Esher	1826
D. J. Snethen	"	John C. Pechin	"
Joseph L. Roberts	"	Daniel Pidgeon	"
Hugh DeHaven	"	Israel Kinsman	1827
R. Chapman	"	Cornelius Stevenson	1828
G. B. Claxton	"	Thomas Robins	"
A. S. Vanpelt	"	Joseph S. Riley	"
B. Reese	"	Phineas E. Hamm	"
A. J. Felton	"	Paul K. Hubbs	"
R. S. Clark	"	—— Hand	"
R. Murray	"	George M. Stroud	1840
John Strawbridge	1825	John Beatty	"
John Lambert	"	Thomas Robinson	"
Alexander J. Miller	"	Henry Sell	"
James Morrell	"	James Field	"
Benjamin H. Rand	"	James McClaranan	"
Alexander S. Miller	1826	William Lawrence	"

John K. Bringhurst	1840	Thomas D. Smith	1859
William Robinson	"	William Haverstick	"
William Norris	"	Chas. W. Hare	1860
Frederick Uber	"	D. L. Huntington	"
John Hargrave	"	Lewis D. Vail	1861
Thomas Hargrave	1841	Thomas F. Adams	1862
Andrew D. Cash	"	Francis A. Bregy	1863
George Elliott	1842	Clifford P. MacCalla	"
James D. Whetham	"	George F. Alkins	1864
John Lambert, Jr.	1843	J. Wagner Jermon	"
Thomas Briggs	"	David B. Taylor	"
Henry Rohrman	1845	Walter J. Budd	1865
Joseph Beaty	"	J. R. Casselberry	"
James Clark	"	Horace Y. Evans, M. D.	"
Samuel Overn	"	Charles Keilig	"
James DeBoos	"	Joseph E. Gillingham	1866
Joseph Wright	"	Samuel James	"
—— Stiles	1846	H. Wright	"
Benj. J. Douglass	"	Henry L. Hoff	1867
J. Murray Rush	1847	Richd. S. Wainwright	"
Benjamin Williams	"	Thomas Cain	1868
J. D. Logan	"	Joseph G. Darlington	1870
Samuel Riddle	"	Joseph P. Mumford	1871
Nathan Davidson	1848	Elam F. Witmer	1872
Robert Martin	"	Samuel R. Marshall	1873
George Robinson	"	William A. Millar	"
Samuel Van Loan	"	William S. Harvey	1874
Armstrong Leiper	1849	James M. Arrison	1876
David Moore	"	Chas. S. Howe	"
Robert West	"	George M. Given	"
James S. McCalla	1850	George A. West	"
Alphonso B. Shubert	"	W. M. L. Rickards, M. D.	1877
Samuel A. Murray	1854	Walter E. Turner	"
S. Griffitts Wells	"	John McCarthy	1878
Philip L. Fox	1856	Edwin A. Landell	"
James Russell	1858	John Overn	"

David E. Stout	1879	A. H. Fetterolf	1886
Henry O. Hurlburt	1880	Henry D'Olier	1891
John J. Gilroy	1883	Wm. H. Crawford	1892
Edward R. Stone, M. D.	1884	Austin R. Hill	1893
Philip Jagode	"	James W. Brian	1895
D. W. C. Walsh	1885	Wm. W. Thomson	1896
John D. Eberbach	"	Edward W. Mumford	"
Edwd. A. Bonsall	"	Edward Powell	1898
Walter Birch	1886	Isidore Levin	1899
Jas. H. M. Hayes	1899		

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Committee on Seventy-fifth Anniversary

REV. ROBERT W. FORSYTH

EDWARD H. BONSALL

ISIDORE LEVIN

SAMUEL R. MARSHALL

JOHN OVERN

JOSEPH P. MUMFORD

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Grateful acknowledgment is hereby made to Messrs. Allen Childs, Louis De Pui Vail, John J. Gilroy, Joseph S. Johnston and Mrs. A. E. T. Wintringham for the material from which this Historical Sketch is largely compiled.